

by some "knight of high degree," and connecting with itself the history of centuries; suggesting to the gazer the sublime enterprises, the lofty heroism, the romantic gallantry of the age of chivalry; and affording in its own particular historic page, some brilliant example of each of these wondrously beautiful characteristics. Perhaps within that same circuit is some field enriched with the blood of his ancestors, shed in one of those many heroic contests to which he owes the freedom, the very life, which he now enjoys. The case is very similar with the inhabitant of every other country in Europe. How can such a man fail to be keenly alive to poetic sentiment? Still more earnestly, it may be asked, how can he who has been reared in such scenes and among such traditions, fail to respond to the numbers of the poetic genius who has lived beneath the same sky, who has breathed inspiration from the same poetic atmosphere?

But, turn to this side of the Atlantic, and what a change do we find. We are in a New World—one which may almost be said to be *new* in everything. To the knowledge of its inhabitants, the history of this land extends back only through some three or four generations, beyond which period a veil of impenetrable mystery rests upon the past. The local tales and traditions of a country, whose whole history is comprised in so brief a period, cannot tend very much to stimulate poetic feelings in his bosom. His reason teaches him, that he too is descended from the time-honored fathers of Europe, yet he feels himself one of a distinct race from that ancient stock. A race which has sprung into existence, as it were, but yesterday. If his heart throbs with an emotion called up by some poetic strain of distant Europe, he feels, for the moment, as a European, not as an American; and turning to his native *stump-land*, that emotion is speedily dispelled. He feels that, if there is no poetry but the poetry of the *past*, it is a thing with which he, as a native of the New World, has nothing to do. He must live, and grovel, and die among the stumps. Alas, the stumps! What a degree of antagonism they present to the growth of poetic temperament.

Now herein consists the error of the poets and romance-writers of America, as a class. They have written, we may suppose, for a public of American readers; but that public, to appreciate any merits in the works in question, must be endowed with the tastes and feelings of a people living upon another Continent. Their scenery, their characters, are drawn from the Old World; their illustrations are such as do not come home with force upon the minds of their New World readers; even their peculiarities of style, their "mannerisms," where such exist, breathe not of the Western Hemisphere. Even in the few instances where this is not the case, we see that the author's general plans, his machinery, his ideas, are probably unconsciously to himself, *modelled* upon those of his European predecessors, and consequently are not suited to the mental disposition of his American readers *as* American readers.